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GUSTAF FRÖDING

Selected Poems



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TORONTO

GUSTAF FRÖDING

Selected Poems

TRANSLATED FROM THE SWEDISH
WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

CHARLES WHARTON STORK

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"THE QUEEN OF ORPLEDE," ETC.



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TO
GEORGE LYMAN KITTREDGE
PREËMINENT SCHOLAR
AND
INTERPRETER OF LITERATURE

THE translations in this volume have been favorably passed upon by the PUBLICATION COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN-SCANDINAVIAN FOUNDATION. Several of the poems have appeared in the *American-Scandinavian Review*, and are here reproduced with the courteous permission of the FOUNDATION.

INTRODUCTION

ONE of the most marked tendencies in recent European literature has been the sudden rise and growth of Scandinavian influence. Ibsen, Bjørnsen and Strindberg created new types of the drama, Ellen Key advanced the cause of feminism, and Selma Lagerlöf is now generally recognized as one of the greatest living novelists. And yet, despite all this, the richest and most characteristic field of Scandinavian letters has been hitherto unexplored. The Northmen themselves, whether Norwegians, Danes or Swedes, pride themselves most on their lyric poetry, in which the Swedish Muse is by far the most eminent. Of this very little is known in English, the only Swedish poets who have been translated at all extensively being Runeberg and

Tegnér, whose "Frithiof's Saga" is rather epic than lyric.

The variety and power of the Swedish lyric is far too great to be more than touched on here. It had its roots in the folk-songs, began to develop in the first half of the Seventeenth Century and assumed more conscious artistic form about 1750. At first it was largely influenced by German, Italian and French models, later to some degree by the English Romantic Movement, and again by the Romanticism of Germany. The greatest of the early names is that of Karl Mikael Bellman, a consummate master of verse-form. After him important poets come thick and fast through the Nineteenth Century, reaching a climax in the early part of the present generation with such men as Snoilsky and Fröding. There has, however, been hardly any decline since then, as the number of notable living poets attests; among others Daniel Fallström, Erik

Karlfeldt, Per Hallström, and Verner von Heidenstam.

All good poetry has the quality of universality. We therefore find the Swedish lyric dealing with all the great human emotions; with religion, with love, with the beauty of nature, and the rest of the gamut. If we sought to define the peculiarly national characteristics of the Swedish lyric, we might say that they were: first, a remarkable closeness to the earth, reminding one rather of primitive than of modern poetry; and secondly, on the other side, a purely visionary quality, a sort of clairvoyance in the realm of the imagination. These two opposed faculties tend to give the remarkable contrast with which every reader will be struck. There is also a considerable classic tinge in some poets, and a strong injection of modern thought and philosophy in others. Kindliness and trenchant humor very frequently relieve the tension of

too insistent seriousness. In form the Swede adheres to regular metres and stanzaic arrangements, which he varies with infinite skill.

In the long array of distinguished Swedish poets the most striking and probably the greatest figure is that of Gustaf Fröding. He is at least the most powerful, the most popular and the most finely imaginative. He unites the qualities already mentioned with remarkable breadth of appeal, intellectual vigor, and a compactness of style that makes every phrase significant. In his pictures of peasant life he reminds one most of Burns, some of whose songs he translated, but his ironic humor is more like that of Heine. The visionary gift appears in poems of almost Shelleyan ideal beauty, and his power of dramatic narrative has a virility which makes the work of Kipling seem journalistic. Above all in every line we are impressed by his complete originality, his absolute truth to nature and his own emotions.

Fröding was born in 1860 near Karlstad in the province of Vermland, an inland region in the southern part of Sweden. His youth was passed in rather humble circumstances, as we may judge from his poems "Homecoming" and "An Old Room." He thus lived very close to the common people whom he was to interpret. In 1880-83 he studied at the University of Upsala, but he later returned to his native Vermland and worked on a newspaper. His first volume of lyrics, which appeared in 1891, gained him at once a wide popularity, and all of his other important works appeared in the years immediately following, up to 1897. Unfortunately his resemblance to Burns extended to his life as well as to his poetry, and the rest of his career was made unproductive and miserable by dissipation. He died at Stockholm in 1911.

Let us quickly turn from this chronicle of apparent failure to look at Fröding's achievement.

His people, recognizing his marvellous portrayal of their life and character, idolized him almost from the first, and his funeral was an occasion of universal grief and of honors equal to those paid to royalty. In his life he had been a somewhat gloomy and very solitary figure, for he never married. But he was enshrined in the hearts of his countrymen as no poet has been since Burns, and his grave is still kept covered with fresh flowers. Furthermore, over 30,000 sets of his completed poems have been sold in a country of only five and a half million people.

Deep human sympathy is perhaps the dominant note of Fröding's poetry; in especial, sympathy for the erring and unfortunate, of whom he felt himself to be one. His doctrine of universal forgiveness is touchingly revealed in "A Poor Monk of Skara" and "Dreams in Hades." With splendid courage he presents the facts of life, which in his poetry are less sordid because they

are so thoroughly humanized. Who has more truly and boldly presented the problem of sex than he has in "Man and Woman"? His interest is rather in people than in nature, though his "Pastoral" is a charming picture, and incidental scenes are always vividly rendered. His power of immediate visualization is most marked, as for instance in such a purely objective sketch as "The City Lieutenant." He sees what he imagines as clearly as if it were physically before him. Prince Aladdin stands before us as definitely as does Hunter Malm. Even so grim a figure as the "Old Mountain Troll" is drawn understandingly, and given a half-human interest.

Nor is Fröding deficient in delicacy. What could be prettier than "Marauders" or the last part of "Homecoming"? What more exquisite than the beauty of "There Should Have Been Stars"? His imagination drifts easily across from actual scenes to delightful fancies, as in

"The Ball" or "A Girl in the Eyes." Like nearly all northern poets, he has a passion for the languorous beauty of the Orient, which appears in "I Would That I Were" and "A Dream of the Orient." His irony is directed upon social and still more upon religious sham; Burns' attacks on the "unco-guid" find their counterpart in "Our Dean," "The Prayer-Meeting" and "Pious Ineptitude," not to mention that shocking urchin "Little Joe-Johnny." Purely genial humor is at its best in "Mountain Trolls" and the comic self-analysis of "The Ball." We find also the gift of seeing universal significance in a brief incident, such as that of "See Where the Dreamer Comes" or "So Goes the World."

Fröding may perhaps be accused of too great frankness. This is partly due to his earnestness and penetration, partly to the tendency of the age. The poet certainly never dallies with vice. If the subject demands it, he strikes right

to the heart of the matter without prudery or false modesty. His good taste prevents him from dwelling defiantly on details as Whitman is inclined to do. No one who admires Kipling's "Gunga Din," "Mandalay," and "The Mary Gloster" need fear any undue shock to his or her sensibilities from the Swedish realist.

Fröding, despite the variety of his work which has already been indicated, seldom writes anything that can be called a song. There is almost always a story behind any given poem, even though the outlines are as indefinite as in the wonderful lines of "Sigh, Sigh, Rushes!" An exception to this is the "Love Song," in which the poet shows that his ideal conception of woman was not lost in the rough ways where he was driven to wander. Again, Fröding never uses the simple, impersonal narrative method of the ballad; like Browning he takes a personal point of view, thus giving the reader not only the story but the character of the teller.

We have noted that Fröding is somewhat limited in his poetic treatment. In form, however, he shows astonishing command and variety. He is, as Dr. Leach remarks in his valuable book "Scandinavia of the Scandinavians," a marvellous metrist. Only once does he approach *vers libre*; strangely enough, in the first piece of his collected poems, "A Song of Songs," in which he gracefully transfers the style of the Bible to the mountain atmosphere of Vermland. Otherwise he keeps to regular metre and rhyme. His favorite type of verse is one of a rather informal kind, with well-marked accents and frequent extra syllables, which gives the reader an impression of remarkable directness. There seems to be no end to the stanzaic arrangements at his disposal, in all of which he is equally at home. If a poem runs to a couple of hundred lines, he will have six or eight different forms of verse, each fitted to the particular mood it is

meant to convey. Thus "The Ball" begins informally, runs into a rapid metre to indicate confusion and tumult, introduces the heroine with a smooth gliding measure, etc., etc. On the whole, considering his wealth of substance, power of treatment and mastery of form, it is doubtful whether any European lyricist since Goethe, Hugo excepted, has outrivaled Gustaf Fröding.

Nothing has been said as yet with regard to the Swedish language. Longfellow describes it as "soft and musical, with an accent like the lowland Scotch." Far from being harsh, as northern languages are supposed to be, Swedish has a rich, one might almost say creamy, quality, and the vowel sounds are unusually pure and beautiful. Besides its musical possibilities, Swedish has, partly by recent borrowing from French and German, an ample vocabulary for poetic expression. Besides using both melody and vocabulary to the full, Fröding often resorts

to dialect, much as Burns does, for forceful and humorous effects. This quality has been reproduced in English only to a modified extent.

The difficulties of translating Fröding will by this time be apparent to any reader of the introduction. Many Swedes have asserted that the Vermland poems never could be rendered into English, though some readers of the following attempts have been so kind as to change their previous opinion. The present translator has endeavored first to live himself into the originals, and then to reproduce them in English as if he were writing them for the first time. He has above all aimed at producing vital English poetry; along with that he has tried to be as faithful to detail as his primary purpose would allow. It is obviously impossible to avoid "translator's English" and at the same time be always literal. The best translation in English is probably Fitzgerald's "Rubaiyat," which is much freer than the

versions of Fröding here submitted. The original metres have been kept whenever they could be made to seem native in English; in a few cases equivalent metres have been substituted, but the change in such cases has always been slight. Considerable latitude has, however, been used in the rendering of proper names. How successful the following attempts to catch the spirit of the original have been, the reader will judge.

The translator wishes to express his cordial thanks to Dr. Amandus Johnson, of the University of Pennsylvania; to Dr. Henry Goddard Leach, of the American Scandinavian Foundation; and to Miss Greta Linder of Stockholm, for their encouragement and assistance.

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VERMLAND POEMS

A SONG-OF-SONGS

My belovèd is like unto a slender fir-tree,
Like unto a singing water-brook,
And like unto a budding rose
When the dew falleth at morning-tide.
And her beauty's might is as it were a great
 army,
Which overthroweth its enemies
With a thunderous noise, and rusheth forward
And crieth aloud: "Who can resist me?"

Say unto me, ye daughters of Vermland,
Ye who tend flocks in the mountains,
Or sit by the roadside
Conversing together,
Have ye seen my belovèd,
Have ye seen whether my budding rose
Went by this way?

For behold! her going is as a dance over the
meadows,

Yea, as a dance of the daughter of a great
king;

And her voice is as a sweet sound,

Yea, as the sound of merry music in the
mountains;

And the delight of her countenance

Is as the sun upon the lakes, —

Upon the beautiful lakes in the valleys.

I came unto the dwelling of my belovèd

When evening was cool and the shadows were
lengthening,

And the birches of my belovèd's father stood
up green,

And the scent of the birches was more fragrant
than myrrh,

Than nard and all the powders of the apothecary.

See! my belovèd wandereth in the garden
And she concealeth herself from the sight of
mine eyes

Beneath bushes of gooseberry and currant.
Like unto a young lion she lieth in wait,
Like a bold band of robbers in ambush,
Taking counsel in the naughtiness of her soul
How she may surprise him whom she loveth,
To the end that she may devour him
With her mouth — which is not very large —
And with her lips, which are red as good wine.

Like unto a storm she came out from the
bushes,

Yea, like unto a mighty storm with wind and
rain;

When the hailstones are as the falling of lilies,
And the rain is as a rain of roses,
And the wind is as a loud laughter
And the echo of many cymbals.

And she fell upon me and took me captive
To be her prisoner of war and her slave,
And she pronounced to me the wrath of her
lips

And gave forth a judgment and said :
“Thou art welcome to my father’s dwelling,
Behold ! thou art esteemed most dear and
wholly welcome.”

And she brought me forth from the pantry
The juice of raspberries from the garden,
And precious pastry and many cakes
And we ate thereof and talked together unto
the going-down of the sun.

But alas ! many days have gone by
Since I looked upon the eyes of my belovèd,
And my thoughts go astray upon forgotten
by-paths,
Because my belovèd is before all others

On this land,
Because she is like unto a young fir-tree,
And unto a singing water-brook,
And unto the sunlight upon the lakes, —
Upon the beautiful lakes in the valleys.

Say unto me, ye daughters of Vermland,
Ye who tend sheep and cattle in the mountains;
Or converse together by the roadside,
Have ye beheld her whom my soul loveth,
Have ye seen whether my belovèd
Went by this way?

INDIANS

Come, don't try your haughty ways on me
here,

Leave them till the next ball, anyway!
We're outdoors now and it's good to be here,
Soft the moss and cool the shade to-day.

Let my head rest on your knees, my darling,
And be happy for an hour — so!
We've enough of quarreling and snarling;
Life's a weary uphill road to go.

I will be a savage, — that's the notion! —
Play the tyrant as a savage can;
You shall follow at the slightest motion,
I will be a rude primeval man.

I'll complain for any cause whatever,
Growl at meals no matter what you do:

“Call that a veal cutlet? — Well, that’s clever!
Look, you cat, you’ve burnt the spinach, too.”

There’ll be time enough, sweetheart, to see to
Woman’s rights and all such petty strife.
Here the woods are free. Let us be free, too,
From the strenuous pedantry of life!

Let’s pretend we live here in the forest,
Play we’re Indians going out to war,
For our wigwam we can take the nearest
Barn, and I’ll of course be sagamore.

Fierce or lazy is my disposition,
And my name is Miantonimah.
You shall come on every expedition,
Pale white maiden Tith-oh-Wah-ta-Wah.

When with blood my tomahawk is sated,
Comfortably on my back I’ll lie,

With my rage for murder all abated
Take my ease or maybe catch a fly.

Tith-oh-Wah-ta-Wah must go a-trudging
After mice and worms to fill my maw,
She must fetch and carry, still be drudging,
Poor, poor little Tith-oh-Wah-ta-Wah!

She will spread the meal for me to eat, then,
With a giant fern for table-mat,
And for thanks beside the sachem's feet, then,
She may sit and watch him, like a cat.

When I've eaten of the food provided
By the Mighty Spirit, Manitou,
Then — as now — my head shall be confided
To your knees; my peaceful pillow, you.

Come, don't pull my hair out, I must scold you,
You disgrace me, Indian maiden wild.
It's all true, — the chief of whom I told you
And his wife, — I read it when a child.

PASTORAL

Heard you ne'er cowbells, heard you ne'er
singing

Stray down the meadow at evening fall?

Cows low their answer and quicken the swinging
Stride of their pace at the milk-maid's call.

O'er heath and moorland the shrill notes flow:

"Co', Lily — co', Lily — co', Lily — co'!"

Echoes, awakening, northward go,

Cliffs all replying

Softly the dying

"Co', Lily — co', Lily — co'!"

Falls now, now rises the cowbells' vibration

Till all is hushed in the valley beneath,

Still are the woods, half-asleep in their station.

Lastly the wandering
Call goes meandering
From near to far over moorland and heath.

Night comes apace with the sun's fading
glimmer,
See on the lake how the vapor trails!
Shades grow more solid, and longer and dimmer,
Quickly the dark o'er the forest prevails.

Spruces and pine-trees are slumbering in shadow,
Duller the rush of the cataract's play.
Faintly the voices recede from the meadow,
Wander and scatter and die far away.

THE WOOD SPRITE

At Cedar Copse, in the neighborhood
Of Lumbertown, in Gunnerud's Wood,
The wood sprite has her haunt.
Go see her, if you want!

She lures all men-folk and drives them mad,
For not long ago Farmer Vickbom's lad
Saw her at dusk of day
When going by that way.

She was clad as fine as a holiday priest
With a garland of fern and a shiny vest,
And a spruce-twigg skirt to her knees
That was fragrant as orchises.

It scared him to see her twist about
Like a sapling pine-tree in and out,

For she was as quick and lithe
As a snake that squirms on a scythe.

She ran like a roebuck with lynx-cat bounds,
Or a witch or a devil dodging the hounds,
Then crouched upon a limb
And glowered out at him.

She scared the boy into fifty fits,
For a month or more he lost his wits;
He still acts foolishly,
As any sane man can see.

OUR DEAN

Our dean, if you please,
Is round as a cheese
And has learned wicked ways are pleasant;
He's vulgar mayhap,
But a friendly chap
Not ashamed that his pa was a peasant.
He lives as do we,
Finds that coffee and brandy agree,
As do we,
A bottle he never refuses.
Lazy sinner! —
As we —
He loves dinner —
As we, —
But on feast-days his nature he loses.

When the priestly robes on his shoulders fall,
The rest of us feel uncommonly small,
While the dean increases in figure;
For he looks like a dean from top to toe,
And a thundering fellow I'd have you know, —
Few deans have a parish bigger.
I'll never forget in all my days
How he shone last time in the glowing blaze
Of general admiration;
Poor sinners he ground
And mashed around
In the mortar of reprobation,
Till he wept — and no shame
In that! — when he came
To speak of hell and damnation.

And even as *he* wept, so wept we,
For our flesh was sizzling frightfully
And all our souls were in jeopardy.
And the high church delegates looked most meek

When the dean faced about
And they followed him out,
For the Council was held in our church that
week.

So you may believe
'Twas like a reprieve
When the dean with mild intonation,
As he made a slight bow,
Said: "My friends, let us now
Partake of a modest collation!"

MATRIMONIAL QUERIES

We'll have a harrow and we'll have a plough,
We'll have a horse that can pull them, I vow.
"Yes, and a garden for cabbages, too."

Right, Erik!

Right, Maya!

That's what we'll do.

We'll have a pig that can eat up the swill,
Chickens and ducks we will have, so we will.
"Coffee and sugar and meat for our stew."

Right, Erik!

Right, Maya!

That's what we'll do.

We'll drive a cow to our field, when we're wed.
"We'll have down pillows to lay on our bed,

Glasses and dishes of china so blue."

Right, Erik!

Right, Maya!

That's what we'll do.

But, Maya, these things will be hard to procure,

You are so lazy and I am so poor,

The parish feeds me and roots nourish you.

Well, Erik!

Well, Maya!

What shall we do?

“THEY DANCED BY THE ROADSIDE”

They danced by the roadside on Saturday night,
And the laughter resounded to left and to right,

With shouts of “Hip, hip!” and of “Hey!”

Nils Utterman, the fiddler’s daft young sprig,
Sat there with his bagpipes and played them a
jig,

With doodely, doodely, day!

There was Cottage Bess. — whose attractions
are many,

She is pretty and slim, though she hasn’t a
penny,

She’s brimful of mischief and fun.

There was Christie, — the wild, independent
young lassie! —

And Pimple-faced Biddy, and Tilly, and Cassie,
And rollicking Meg o’ the Run.

"THEY DANCED BY THE ROADSIDE" 21

There was Pete o' the Ridge and Gus o' the
Rise, —

Who are nimble at tossing a girl to the skies

And at catching her when she comes down.

There was Phil o' the Croft and Nick o' the
Bend,

And Pistol the Soldier, and Journeyman Lind,

And Karl-John of Taylortown.

They danced there as madly as tow set afire,

All jumping like grasshoppers higher and higher,

And heel it rang sharp upon stone.

The coat-tails they fluttered, the dominos flew,

And pig-tails were flapping, and skirts flung
askew,

While the music would whimper and drone.

Then in birch or in alder or hazel thicket

There was whispering light as the chirp of a
cricket

From the shadowy darkness near.

Over stock, over stone there was flight and
pursuing,

And under green boughs there was billing and
cooing —

“If you want me, then come for me here!”

Over all lay the twinkling, star-lovely night;
In the wood-bordered bay a shimmery light
Fell soft on the hurrying waves.

A breeze, clover-laden, was borne from the
meadow,

And a resinous whiff from the pines that o'er-
shadow

The crests of the water-worn caves.

A fox lent his voice to the revellers' din,
And “Oohoo!” from Bear Crag an owl joined in;

But they heard not, they heeded not, they.

“Oohoo!” from Goat Mountain the echo rang,
And for answer Nils Utterman's bagpipes sang

Their doodely, doodely, day!

THE RIGHTS OF A HARE

A hare with perfect right
May nibble, conscience-free,
His cabbage till he's quite
As full as full can be,
And live his little life so dear, —
Supposing that no fox is near.

And if a fox should try
To make the hare his prey
And cook him in his den,
The hare may spring up high
And nimbly speed away
On his hare-legs again.
But this to do he may not dare:
Call himself other than a hare.

MOUNTAIN TROLLS

“Well, you may believe me or may not believe
me;

But 'twas this way it was, and the devil may
have me

If 'twasn't a troll-pack that caught me one
night.

We had charge of a furnace in Westerly
Moor,

And the night was nigh finished, the clock stood
at four,

When the racket began and Peer jumped up in
fright.

It crashed round the peaks and it roared in the
valley

Like a bellowing ox in the mountains,” said
Olë.

“They tramped and they stamped from all
points of the compass,

And 'twas funny, but God! it was trolls made
the rumpus.

There were some big as churches, and slowly
they filed

Through the trees, which resounded with thunder
and thud;

There was twisting and groaning all over the
wood,

For the firs were to them but as grass to a
child.

And Peer he crouched under the root of a tree
And I by a big pile of charcoal,” said he.

“Like the clashing of iron the noise of them
rang,

For they'd arms like steam-hammers, had some
of the gang;

And some they had fists like a great iron casting;

Some had mouths like a mine-shaft, and added
to that,

Some had thatch like the roof of a shed for a
hat;

And some sent out fire like a furnace a-blasting;
Some had snouts like an iron steam crane in
their head, —

And golly! it was a bit scary," he said.

"They sat round the furnace and roasted huge
steaks

Of pig-iron, and made themselves broth out of
spikes,

And ate ploughs as if chewing on chicken or
lamb;

Then all round the furnace the trolls began
dancing

Till they looked just like houses and churches
a-prancing,

And it sounded like thunder, the rumble and slam.

I've traveled a bit and seen many a spree,
But I never saw dance up to that one," said
he.

"And as I lay there like a bundle of clouts,
Came a troll up with one of the ugliest snouts
And felt me and turned my poor body around.
'Look sharp here, look out if you don't smell a
rat!

Here's a bit of old meat,' said the troll; but
with that

Of a sudden the sun had come up with a bound.
'The sun's here,' says I, 'and the east is all
red.'

They sneezed and all took to their heels then,"
he said.

"It roared in the mountains and rang in the
valley,
But at last 'mid far summits, it died away slowly,

Till it sank to a hum in the woods to the north.
Still it looked like a fight to see chimneys
a-shaking,

When ore-house and coal-house and smithy
were quaking,

For as if turning cartwheels, they swayed back
and forth. —

Yes, trolls fear the sun just as I should fear truly
To lie or to draw the long bow," finished Olë.

THE OLD MOUNTAIN TROLL

The evening draws on apace now,
The night will be dark and drear;
I ought to go up to my place now,
But 'tis pleasanter far down here.

'Mid the peaks where the snow-storm is yelling
'Tis lonely and empty and cold;
But 'tis merry where people are dwelling,
In the beautiful dale's green fold.

And I think that when I was last here
A princess wondrously fair
With gold on her head went past here;
She'd be food for a month, I swear!

The rest fled, for none dared linger,
But they turned when far off to cry,

While each of them pointed a finger:

"What a great nasty troll! oh fie!"

But the princess, friendly and mild-eyed,

Gazed up at me, object of fright,

Though I must have looked evil and wild-eyed,

And her friends had all taken to flight.

Next time I will kiss her and hold her,

Though ugly of mouth am I,

And cradle and lull on my shoulder,

Saying: "Bye, little sweet-snout, bye!"

And into a sack I'll get her

And take her home with me straight,

And then at Yule I will eat her

Served up on a fine gold plate.

But hum, a-hum, but come, come, come!

Who'd look at me then so kindly?

I'm a dullard surely — a-hum, a-hum! —
To think the thing out so blindly.

These Christian children are tender
As lambs; we're but trolls, are we,
And for eating, when luck seemed to send her,
'Twould be hard to let her be.

And yet things easily move us,
Though we're lonely and wicked and dull,
Some teaching would surely improve us,
And get through even my old skull.

THE WIVES OF HUNTER MALM

I

He entered and said: "Good even! good folk,
And thanks for last time I came in."

Then he sat himself down by the chimney
nook, —

What with tramping and want he looked thin.

At his feet lay his gun and his traps, with a
string

Of wild-fowl from heath and from moor.

He picked up a wood-grouse with wide-spread-
ing wing:

"Take that for my welcome before:"

The glow of the fire, as he basked in its heat,
On the hunter's dark form redly fell,

While the good-wife was cutting off collops of
meat,

Bits of sausage and pudding as well.

“He’s tired, he’s come a long way, the poor man;
Fall to, then, and take what you get.

There’s a drop — thank the nixie! — to follow
it then;

To-night is the bitterest yet!”

Right soon fell a hush in the low-humming
sound,

As grandmother’s wheel ceased to spin,

And the boys and the girls gathered quietly
round

To listen when Malm should begin.

But Malm was not merry, as erst he would be,
Nor sang as when last he was there;
He was silent and surly, ’twas easy to see,
With no gay lying stories to spare.

II

“Hark ye! Malm,” the good-wife bade then,
“Where’s the maiden that you had then
When you came here last? She carried
All your game upon her back;
She, poor thing! you said you’d married,
Called her wife, good-lack!

“Shy as woodland hare methought her,
But she followed, when you brought her,
At your heels as hound his master;
Like your horse your load she bore, —
Work enough had she to last her,
Aye, good soul! and more.”

“You mean Biddy? — Nay, ’twas never;
Blow on blow I had to give her.
Or with Christie was I bedding?
Many a wife I’ve had and lost;
In the woods there I’ve a wedding
Every day almost.

"As I came by Elfdale sedges
Over Whitsand on the ledges,
There was someone caterwauling,
Crying, 'Oh, dear Malm, come in!'
Lo! it was *my wife* a-calling,
Or my once-had-been.

"So I stopped and gave the hussy
My last coin and said: 'Get busy!
If you want another, beg it,
Or if that won't do, why steal.
Wipe your face, dear. I must leg it;
I'm in haste. Farewell!'

"As I jogged up Fryken highway,
There a girl stood on a by-way;
In a rag I saw her gather
Twins, and in a voice I knew:
'Sweetie tootsies, look at father!'
Screamed she. — My wife, too!

“While on Rottne I was standing,
All the woodland slope commanding,
Came a troop of brats to plague me,
With two jades. Dumb-struck I stood,
When they all began to beg me,
Weeping, for some food.

“They were folk from o’er the border,
Gypsies of the lowest order,
Black as sin were all the rout, then.
So my answer to them was:
‘If you’re hungry, go without, then!—
That’s what father does.’”

“Malm’s old stories!” said the mother.
“Well, go on and tell another
Story of your favorite pastime,
Partly false and partly true.
Tell us, though, of her that last time
You had here with you.”

“I *did* lie,” said Malm, and faltered,
And his whole expression altered;
Tense he stared in indecision
At the fire, then o’er his brow
Drew his hand, as if a vision
Rose before him now.

“This is truth, then, not one tittle
More or less, about my little
Last wife, if you’ll hear about it;
Eli-lita was her name, —
If you don’t believe, why, doubt it,
Still the truth’s the same.

“Yes, she *was* my dog, I taught her
How to drudge on meal and water;
Was my little mare so slender,
Worked and starved and froze with me;
And my bed-mate, and my tender
Little sweetheart she.

“She was kind through all my tasking,
Gave me all things for the asking,
Never said an ill word of me,
And if I grew harder, why
All the better she would love me, —
That was her reply.

“But you know how one misuses
Love like that, and most abuses
What he cares for most of all things,
Greedily from her alone
Taking great and taking small things
Until all is gone.

“Tell me, have I never hounded
Some poor red-deer when ’twas wounded;
Have I seen how soft it eyed me,
Though by then ’twas sorely bled,
How it suffered, and beside me —
Just like that! — was dead?

“So did Eli-lita, turning,
Look at me with pain and yearning,
When—like that!—she sank down quickly,
Lay where she had stood,
And her breath was rattling sickly,
From her mouth came blood.

“When the blood began to thicken
And the flow began to weaken,
She was white as chalk, but bluer,
She whose cheek was never red;
When I stooped to whisper to her,
She was dead.

“By a fir-tree’s roots I laid her
In the wilderness and made her
Of the mould and twigs a cover
’Mid the needles and the moss,
Cutting in the bark thereover
Letters and a cross.

“But that’s long since now, and no man
Should keep snivelling for a woman
Till his lungs go bad, I’m thinking —
Old-maids’ foolishness! that’s all.
Give me summat strong for drinking!
Thanks to you, and skoal!”

LITTLE JOE-JOHNNY

“Little Joe-Johnny, —

Isn't he bonny ?

Takes after mother, the good little dear !

Look how he blows now

In's fist his nose now

Just as his pa does. Joe-Johnny, come here !

“Look ! how politely

He bows, and how brightly

Shine the long curls of our little Joe-Johnny.

Hoho ! my sonny

Knows how to make himself pleasant, you see.

Yes, and he's able to

Quote from the Bible too,

Well as the dean, priest and sexton, all three.

“Tell me, Joe-Johnny, what was it that Moses —
Look how your nose is! —

Promised the Jews in the words of the law,
If they would honor their pa and their ma?

“Now you shall hear from little Joe-Johnny —
He’ll be a priest when he’s bigger, what’s more,”
So said his mother, caressing Joe-Johnny.
But — awful to tell! —

When she was done, he

Swore

Stoutly and gruffly: “Oh, ma, go to hell!”

MAIDENS' GLANCES

Oh, be ye ware of maidens
And of their fickle glance.
A fickle maiden's glances
Have brought me evil chance;
Her glance of wit bereaved me,
And then her glance deceived me.

She glanced at all and several,
She likewise glanced at me,
She promised she would follow me
On life's road faithfully,
But when another came to her,
She glanced and thought no blame to her.

She'd glance about from side to side
And always nod assent
To each and every village lad

Who came on pleasure bent.
The devil take the glance of her,
The nod and look-askance of her!

And now that we are married
And she is mine, what then?
Each evening she goes out to dance
With all her fancy-men,
While I get many a bang, myself.
I vow I'll go and hang myself.

THREE CAROLLING GIRLS

One morning there journeyed three lasses,
On the high-road to Linden Lea,
Who, swinging their long braided tresses,
Went carolling gayly all three.

They walked first in marching-time only,
Then waltzed along careless and free,
Said, "My but the sea-shore is lonely!"
And carolled on gayly all three.

When they came to the turning, the lasses,
(On the highway to Linden Lea)
They cried "Cuckoo!" and quick in the grasses
They crouched down as still as could be, —
And stayed there as still as the dead then,
And blushed to the eyelids all three.

But why should the girls have grown red then,
And why checked this carol of glee?

Aha!

Three students stood near where it passes, —
The highway to Linden Lea, —
And 'twas therefore they shrank 'mid the grasses,
Those carolling maidens three.

Then the students, who stood there a-smirking,
And sniggering slyly all three,
Cried "Cuckoo!" to the lasses a-lurking,
And mimicked their carol of glee.

AN OLD ROOM

There is an old low room I love;
Dark broken plaster spreads above.
Near-by is heard the muffled tone
Of roaring sluice and sawmill's drone.
The furniture's of ancient mould,
Ample, and stoutly made,
With curving legs of white and gold,
And flower-enwrought brocade.

There in a corner, dim and swart,
Stands a bronze bust of Bonaparte,
Who with his white horse rides in all
The pale engravings on the wall;
Through Ulm and Austerlitz they go,
At Beresina too,
From victory-glow to overthrow
At bloody Waterloo.

Karl-Johan faces, dim with dust,
Napoleon's mute and frigid bust.
The long thin nose is bold and free,
The tight-closed lips curve silently
Ready to hurl forth accents dire
In thundering cascade,
Hot with the heart's volcanic fire,
A mighty gasconade.

A bookcase old of speckled birch,
Where massive carvings darkly perch,
Holds many a poet of romance.
We see as o'er the backs we glance
First Atterborn with flowing hair,
Tegnér, the second guest;
The lily of Sharon's bard is there,
And Brier-Rose's priest.

A lone fly buzzes on the sill,
The clock's long pendulum is still,

The languorous breath of jasmine pours
From blooming bushes out-of-doors,
While pungent from a near-by vase
Comes scent of rose-leaves dead,
Which through the bright prismatic glass
Diffuse their softened red.

Between the windows then appears
A spinet dumb these sixty years;
But I can picture some one there
In corn-gold skirt upon the chair,
With corkscrew curls and shawl of lace, —
The form is my great-aunt's.
Pale orange is her faded face,
And dark her wide-eyed glance.

As languishing as poppy-dreams
She sings with tender tone, and seems
To sway her head in time to words
That tell of love and Persian birds;

Of nightingales that never cease
And violets' perfumed sighs,
Of roses' pain and lilies' peace
In that far paradise.

The chamber fills with sweetest scent
Of ambergris and flowers blent,
With floating down of butterflies,
And all such pretty fooleries;
Till little fays on tiptoe light
Steal softly through the room,
And guardian angels hover bright
Within the shadow's gloom.

HOMECOMING

I

O'er the clouds is a glow, o'er the lake is a sheen,
There's sunlight on beach and on ness,
Around them the woods are a glorious green,
The grass feels the south wind's caress.

'Mid summer and beauty and pure-scented
breeze

I hail this my native strand. —

But there is a void by the maple-trees
Where my father's home used to stand.

It is gone, it is burned, there is nought left be-
hind

Save the rocks of all traces bereft!

But memory comes with the cool-breathing wind,
And memory is all that is left.

I see a white gable before me again,
A window stands open within it,
Through which there is wafted the rollicking
 strain
Of a melody played on the spinet.

And I hear now my father singing his best
As in youth when his spirit was glad.
The song was soon hushed in his languishing
 breast
And his life became weary and sad.

It is gone, it is burned. I will lie by the side
Of the lake here and hark to his tale
Of the woman who lived as the calm years glide,
The old wife of Alsterdale.

He sings of her grief in a voice as low
And soft as a dream-song's tone:
"That is over these twenty long years ago,
That's dead and buried and gone.

“Where you, lovely visions, would formerly
throng

The moonlight falls lonely and pale. —
And that is the end of my cradle-song
Of the old wife of Alsterdale.”

II

That grove! — the cuckoo called from there,
And little girls would bound,
In ragged skirts with feet all bare,
Where berries might be found.
And here was shade and there was sun,
And yon were violets many a one;
To me it all is dear,
My childhood whispers here.

III

Here the path ascends, here the forest grew,
Here the kingdom of fable enthralled our gaze,
Here is the stone that a troll once threw
At a Christian monk in heathen days.

Here is Wolf's castle of boulders drear
Hence rang his piercing, treacherous cries,
Here sat little Ulva, his daughter dear,
With hairy breast and strange mad eyes.

Here goes the road to Happiness Land,
But 'tis long and narrow and weed-begrown;
And no Puss-in-Boots is now at hand
To show us the way as in years long gone.

IV

King Lily-o'th'-Valley so stately
Has a helmet silvery bright,
The young king sorroweth greatly
For his frost-slain princess white.

King Lily-o'th'-Valley, he sinketh
His head so heavy with care,
The light of his helmet blinketh
In the hueless evening air.

A shroud of cobweb covers
 The form so fair in death,
 While soft flower-incense hovers
 And fills the woods with its breath.

From the birch-tops mournfully swinging,
 From green vines nodding on high
 Wee songs of lament are ringing,
 Till the woods are filled with a sigh.

Through the glades a messenger beareth
 The sigh to each whispering leaf,
 Till all the wide forest heareth
 Of Lily-o'th'-Valley's grief.

FROM THE CITY, AND MISCEL-
LANEOUS

THE BALL
AN HEROIC POEM

I

Once, when my youthful head of dreams was full,
Society to me was deadly dull.

The life Bohemian I followed then,
Wrote fervid poems and tore them up again.
Over my punch I wept and played the fool,
At times was reckless, and at others cool;
And went and dreamed of laurels and of gold
Till I grew thin and wretched to behold.

About this time there chanced to be a ball
One winter evening at the public hall.
I hung about the door in borrowed rig,
The coat too long and every way too big,
My shirt-front, stiffly starched and very high,
Stood proudly out beyond my new white tie.

A shirt-stud missing and my shoe-heel torn,
I chafed there full of restlessness and scorn.
Meanwhile before me bustled the élite,
The dignitaries of the county-seat :
Here high officials glittered in gold lace
About the stately chieftain of the place,
And knights of trade with many worthies more
Thronged round their brandy-king, our senator.
Off to one side stood Major Gyldenstorm
And Captain Adelfeldt in uniform,
Yonder a trim lieutenant sauntered by
Twirling his blond mustache impressively,
While over there in eager expectation
A group of stiff civilians had their station.
And, aunt by aunt along the wall, arrayed
In lilac, gold and every other shade,
En-ised in lace, with air serenely grand,
The elder ladies sat and gently fanned
Their youthful cheeks with many a blandishment
Of gracious aristocratic self-content.

A worldly-wise embittered pessimist,
I found the whole thing empty, dull and "triste."
I fumed and fretted at my gaping shoe
And at my accursed borrowed dress-coat too,
And thought: "How stupid! going to a ball."
But stop! the chief is speaking. Silence, all!
Champagne corks pop, and then we hear a song
"Straight from the Swedish heart, sincere and
strong."

II

But hark! these ghostly shuffles now
On stair, till in her ruffles now,
Amid a general bustling
And sound of silks a-rustling,
Old Madame Owl sails in.
Of ancient style her dress is,
Her manner too no less is,
For seventy years have written
Such lines as well befit in
Her white and high-born skin.

But stoutly still she bears herself,
Steers family affairs herself,
And faces wind and weather
As fought of old her father
At Lech and Holofzin.

All others leave their prattle now,
Heads bend and bracelets rattle now,
The while 'mid fluttering banners
And due ancestral honors
Old Madame Owl sails in.

III

Then — as a pleasure-yacht with light wind
sailing
Tacks nimbly round a sturdy admiral-ship,
From mast and sail and wheel and rudder trail-
ing
Festoons of myrtle for her maiden trip,
With flags that stream afresh at every turn —
Comes the granddaughter, Mistress Elsa Erne.

Above her hair a flame-red rose enhances
The gold arranged in classic Swedish line,
With head held like a princess she advances;
Slim is her figure, spirited and fine.
She moves with supple tread in ballet style,
Coquettishly, like town-girls too, the while.

Her eyes are brimming o'er with roguish malice,
Her fresh lips pout most tantalizingly
Just like a budding flower's half-opened chalice,
A snub and disputatious nose has she.
Of grandma's dignity she wears no jot;
She's not a warship but a pleasure-yacht.

A trim yacht on her maiden voyage, riding
The glad waves when the dawn is glimmering
pale,
So — in her grandma's wake demurely gliding,
While the spring breeze fills every murmuring sail,
With flags that stream afresh at every turn, —
Comes the granddaughter, Mistress Elsa Erne.

IV

And with that moment all things took new form,
Wearing a gayer, more elusive charm :
The music seemed more musically rare,
More clear and brilliant grew the gas-light's
 flare,

And my contempt for human-kind took flight ;
The chieftain now looked clever in my sight,
The knights of trade went by with decorous
 heed,

Their brandy-monarch seemed of noble breed ;
The Major too, — with laced and thickset body,
A kindly-souled receptacle for toddy, —
Was now a veteran in life's hard game ;
And all the titled aunties now became
Enshrined in light from days that once had been,
And Mistress Elsa was a glorious queen.

For it was she whom every day I met,
When every day I hurried out to get

My walk to nowhere in particular,
Sunk deep in dreams of things that never were
Or would be; it was she to whose sweet name
I wrote my poems; it was she who came
In dreams, and sat and talked consolingly
With hopeful girlish wisdom then to me.

v

Then, their nonsense uttering,
Off they go
To dance a-fluttering
On nimble toe,
With soft combining
Of black coats twining
'Mid lace outstreaming
As moth-down light,
And shoulders gleaming,
And slippers white.

It was a billowing
Flood of spring,

When the fast-following
Breakers ring.
But mirth was highest
And rapture nighest
When in a corner
By a fern
Where the tide had borne her
Sank Elsa Erne.

She sat there panting,
Flushed and fair,
A young enchanting
Naiad there,
En-frothed in laces
And tulle-foam graces
As, restful-handed,
And eyes content,
She there was stranded
When the wave was spent.

VI

Then I, against bashfulness bracing myself,
Before the young girl boldly placing myself,
Bowed, begged and was given a dance.
Mistress Elsa bowed back and smiled at me,
And constrained herself to be mild to me
And give me a gracious glance.

And into the polka I flung myself,
And there 'mid the dances I swung myself
Like a resolute fighting-boat.
And we turned among them and bumped together,
Like whirling bobbins we jumped together,
And out flew the tails of my coat.

Mistress Elsa grew red, but controlled herself,
And lightly she managed to hold herself
And follow when I would go wrong.
Like Titania at first she tripped about,

But gasped with each step as we skipped about,
And her face became pale before long.

Her anxious manner infected me,
And a cross look at last disconnected me
From my wits and my courage bold.
On tables and chairs we stranded then,
Shipwrecked in the corner we landed then; —
Mistress Elsa's laugh sounded cold.

VII

I understood that everything was over,
And melancholy round my soul did hover;
For I had danced away my happiness,
And drank of wormwood now in mute distress.
All that I saw was once more dead and drear,
All things were shameful, stupid, insincere;
Like fetters on my soul they seemed to close.
I twiddled with my thumbs, I blew my nose,
At floor and wall and ceiling then I peered,
And fingered awkwardly my youthful beard.

She looked at me the while, did Mistress Erne,
And wondered, for her eyes could not discern
My heart's hid sorrow and my spirit's gloom;
She bit her lips for fear a smile would come,
And finally, grown serious with surprise,
She toward her slender ankle drooped her eyes.
Then suddenly I felt a wild desire
To speak as Hamlet does in tragic ire,
And say in tones dramatically stern:
"Go, get thee to a nunnery, Mistress Erne!"
The words would not be clear, but still they'd be
Something not heard at dances frequently.

VIII

Then, looking at the floor, I said at last:
"Miss Erne, full well you know that youth is
 dead,
That love is gone, and life a desert vast
Through which like pallid ghosts we mortals
 tread

And see like smoke our fond illusions going.
In the last rays of twilight faintly glowing.

“Fata Morganas are the journey’s goal,
Toward which we all resistlessly are hurried,
To find but emptiness that cheats the soul
Wherein we wander only to be buried.”
—“Heaven forbid!” the girl cried in amazement,
And clasped her hands with pious self-abasement.

Still darkly staring at the floor, I said :
“Think not by laughter sorrow may be hid,
Nor hark to those who sport beneath the blade
Of fate’s grim axe, as Scherezade did,
From day to day the menaced blow delaying,
Each night with poetry her ransom paying.

“Alas! the law of doom will hear no plea,
Is softened by no maiden hand’s caress,
No poem stays that sultan’s dread decree,
He smites the greater and he smites the less;

The simoon he, what boots it to withstand here
The desert whirlwind's blinding weight of sand
here.

"And think you at this ball you can embrace
True joy? — 'Tis but a death's-head you have
kissed!

We seek for pleasure, pain is in its place;
We feed on husks, the kernel we have missed."
Here anxiously she asked: "Are you insane,
sir?"

Then waited very still to hear my answer.

"Yes," I replied, "when wisdom would devour
Its liver for a jest, the mad are wise;
When life's last flame of joy has ceased to flower,
Only in madness our deliverance lies."

Then she remarked: "Oh, yes, perhaps in one
sense, —

For brainsick boys; but for young girls it's
nonsense!"

IX

Once more I saw triumphantly advance
A trim yacht on the white wave of the dance.
How skilfully she tacked, how fleetly slid,
Her pride of race in everything she did,
From arm to arm she sailed superbly by,
With pliant grace, her bosom heaving high!

Though all around me purled a noisy stream,
Yet I heard nothing, I was in a dream.
I wished to sorrow with a true despair,
But could not, I was much too young for care.
I thought: This really is a stupid pose
To look so sick, so heavy and morose.

Then in my trance I saw a wondrous sight.
I was with Elsa in the starlit night
Upon a bench somewhere far, far away
Beside a lake with waves and splashing spray.
And while on us the moon shone coldly pale

As with the mystic light of some old tale,
I built a splendid castle out of air,
Of moonlight and of pretty nonsense there.

X

Think not that death the end of life shall be;
No, no, ye ageless powers of destiny,
Of whose dark shrine none knoweth certainly,
We shall live on into felicity.

Within the Seventh Heaven's festal hall
With harp and song is held an endless ball,
Whence music goes reëchoing through all
The colonnades from wall to crystal wall.

Star-lustres pour in rainbow tints
Their myriad-sparkling prismatic glints,
While many an archangel's daughter fair,
Shy lashes lowered, is dancing there
On the arm of a cherub prince.
Trains like shimmering mist they bring,

Their diadems blaze like a comet's trail
As through the joyous dance they swing,
And their locks float lightly as clouds that sail
On the languid breath of the summer gale,
While the daylight of lovers' dreams
Flushes each cheek with its beams.
Till, all aflame, they take wings and fly,
The glow of rapture in every eye.
And 'mid the throng in delicious trance
The love-pairs hovering thread the dance,
Then seek their way through the halls, and turn
Into quiet rooms where the lustres burn
With stars that more dimly glance.

And bliss is served in cups of fullest measure,
All redolent of hope, agleam with pleasure.
They sip it from the cups anon and oft
On their celestial couches, cloudy-soft.
And God the Father from his throne the while,
Looking, nods time with glad approving smile,

For He alone has fully understood
The worth of love, and knows that it is good.

At length with bashful step we two advance
Among the countless myriads there that dance,
And bow before the throne respectfully:
“We have come here to seek felicity.
Our wretched country town herewith we spurn —
And this is I and that is Elsa Erne.”

Then God smiles down with gentle irony
And good, grandfather-like solemnity:
“I’m glad that such a pair as you have come.
Take what you find here, make yourselves at
home,
Amid these other youngsters have your fling,
And waltz till Heaven’s arches seem to swing!”

So we dance off, we dance the whole night
through,
Till, tiring, it is easy for us two

To find here in God's palace, when we look,
Somewhere a safe and quite secluded nook.
We steal there, and a life-warm flood
(Like young and new-enamoured blood)
In waves of sheer love through our being
streams. —
And then we fall asleep and dream sweet dreams.

THE CITY LIEUTENANT

Who's coming there, who's riding there? — he
prances with a zest!

As gorgeous as a pennant,
'Tis he, the bold lieutenant.

The girls from windows spy him,
The wistful house-maids eye him.

He sits his gallant charger like a prince who
looks his best.

By glory! but he's handsome in his snow-
white vest.

He sparkles in the sunlight like the facets of a
brook,

His polished boots are gleaming,
Their radiance out-streaming;
His spine is like an arrow,
And my! his waist is narrow.

His coat is like a picture in the latest fashion-
book.

Just look at him, just look at him, just look,
look, look!

He smiles — the young lieutenant — as be-
nignly as a priest,

And twirls his blond mustaches

As through the street he flashes,

Bows to the girls politely,

Nods to the maids more slightly,

And sits his gallant charger like a prince who
looks his best.

By glory! but he's handsome in his snow-white
vest.

POET WENNERBOM

.Through the city park goes a summer sigh,
As Poet Wennerbom, reeling by,
Comes from the poor-house, bottle in hand,
Warily tacks o'er the driveway sand,
Takes a swig the while,
Mumbles and smiles a maudlin smile.

Bees from the gardener's hive hum near,
Caterpillars are tumbling sheer
From the trees, which are all in fullest bloom
Filling the air with rich perfume. —
On the shady sward
The poet sits to drink like a lord.

Birds play tag with a merry twitter,
Hundreds of grasshoppers twang the zither,
Sourly Wennerbom hears the din.
While he gulps away at his wretched gin, —

Swills like a swine, —

The sun's bright beams on the bottle shine.

Poet and bottle commune in glee:

"Gin gives genius," mumbles he;

"Gin gives comfort when hope is fled —

Here's to youth and the days long dead!

Let us drink it straight!

Time passes and we do; such is fate.

"I was happy in faith and noble in thought

Till I drowned in this hog-wash and came to
nought.

I was done at fifteen. What then? Ho, Ho!

Come, brother bottle, all beauty must go.

Here's for a drunk!

Wennerbom's full, that gives him spunk!"

So he falls asleep and dreams at his ease;

Filtering through the compassionate trees,

The light falls on Poet Wennerbom,
And the chestnuts kindly rain down their bloom.
On the empty flask
A swarm of insects hurry or bask.

Rich and pure is his happiness:
His soul is tortured by no distress,
He feels not remorse for shame and sin,
To the dreamland of youth he has entered in;
He slumbers deep, —
'Tis well for the poet to fall asleep.

A SPRING-TIME SWEETHEART

(If I had had one)

A gleam of sunlight crowned her,
As though the morn were flinging
Its gold on her that day ;
Her skirt was rippling round her
Like wild-rose bushes clinging,
And lilacs white that sway.

She came, her cheeks all glowing
With the soft breeze's blowing,
And with the lime-hot bath too
Of looks that neighbors gave her
From peep-hole, crack and door ;
While she gazed back in wrath too
And, blushing more than ever,
Grew prettier than before.

Her bold bright eyes gave token
That all her warmth of being
Was bursting from control;
That all the buds had broken,
And all the brooks were freeing
Their clamor in her soul.

I felt that all the spring then,
With larks upon the wing then
And wind-flowers at her feet there,
Came running glad and fleet there
To seize and capture me;
And kissed me, gently laying
Her breast to mine, and saying:
“Come, love me, be near me,
And take me up and bear me
This instant home with thee!”

MARAUDERS

The first of them is Elsa, and Greta is the
second,

Right well the two have reckoned

The force of their valor upon me.

Small hurricanes are they, that come and go
but never tarry,

Like modern Goths and Vandals they raid me
and they harry,

Until they despoil me utterly.

For Greta's eyes are smiling, each one an artful
beggar,

Most shrewd they look, and eager

For mischief and candy no doubt,

And lips has she to quarrel and vex — the little
rover! —

Such merry lips as Greta's you never could discover,

So boldly they purse themselves and pout.

And Elsa's eyes are large, confiding and caressing,

But never quite suppressing

A deep-seated appetite for cake,

And lips has she, demure and yet so very sly too,

They never can conceal, however they may try to,

That love of fruit is always awake.

And both of them have feet and legs for nimble tripping,

And waltzing and skipping

Most gracefully in stockings and shoes;

And both can dance about till it pleases and provokes one,

And both have naughty little hands to fondle
and to coax one,
And nails which as claws they can use.

They scratch and laugh and mock me, they
choke me in the scrimmage,
And are the very image
Of Cupid in a trouser-skirt;
And if they are Vandals, they are cunning little
Vandals,
If hurricanes, then hurricanes that come on
fairy sandals
In full daylight and cause no hurt.

I walk along half-musing, when something
nearly trips me,
And holds my leg and nips me,
And pulls my coat before I can flee;
There's fumbling at my pocket as if there were
a crab there,

I snatch at it and sure enough a girlie's hand

I grab there,

The smallest and prettiest that could be.

Then Elsa and Greta and eight more small
princesses,

All stout vexatious lasses

Who seem to shirk their lessons at will,

Rush up and with the noise of their battle-cry
astound me,

And dance the schottische, polka and horn-
pipe all around me,

While, thunderstruck, I stand there still.

Then straightway sounds the onset, there's
patting and stroking

And pushing and joking

Of how I am a great millionaire

Who simply overflows with streams of useless
money,

And next they shout in chorus, as if they
thought it funny:

“There’s fruit at gardener Lind’s by the
square!”

I fight then like a man, but the Vandals are
victorious,

And laugh and rush uproarious

Around the corner swift as the wind;

They leave me there disarmed, despoiled and
wholly beaten,

And guzzle till they’re sick with the cherries they
have eaten

At the fruit-shop of gardener Lind.

If on my couch at home my senses I would
muffle,

I hear a stealthy shuffle,

And ask myself what sounds are these,

Until the door flies back and I’m summoned
to surrender,

I struggle and I wrestle — alas! my chance
is slender

With such a horde of wild enemies.

.

They scramble and they clamber and violently
seize me,

They pinch me and they squeeze me,

And tie me to the rack forthwith,

Where Greta and her band soon put me to the
question

And wring from me my pennies to ruin their
digestion

On sweets bought of candy-man Smith.

So goes it every day, and my funds are growing
scanty,

For coppers run a-plenty

In many a little rill from my purse;

And if I dare refuse them, they make the wriest
faces,

And scout the stingy churl with contemptuous
grimaces,

And punish, and slap me and disperse.

But if they stay away and leave me at my
leisure,

I lie there in displeasure,

With lifeless books I soon grow bored,

Till mournfully I think of the battles fierce and
strong then,

And furtively for Elsa and Greta do I long then,
For them and all their Vandal horde.

THE KING'S MISTRESS

I

INGALILL

Ingalill, Ingalill, sing me a song,
My spirit is lonely and life's way is long,
 And my spirit with sorrow must wrestle.
Ingalill, Ingalill, sing me a song,
It soundeth so sweet and consoling and strong,
 So kind in my desolate castle.

Ingalill, Ingalill, sing me a song,
And half of my kingdom to you shall belong,
 With the silver and gold in my castle.
My gold's my delight but my kingdom's my
 care;
Who takes half my kingdom, my sorrow must
 share,
But need *you* fear with sorrow to wrestle?

II

“SIGH, SIGH, RUSHES!”

Sigh, sigh, rushes!

Moan, waves, moan!

Can ye not tell where Ingalill,

Sweet Ingalill has gone?

She cried with the cry of a wounded duck

And sank into the sea. —

That was last year when spring was green

With the promise of joys to be.

She had wakened the wrath of the towns-folk
there,

An evil wrath that she might not bear.

She wakened their wrath by her goods and gold,
The gifts of her royal lover bold.

*With thorns they have pierced mine eyeballs
through,*

With mud have defiled the lily's dew.

Then sing, oh, sing your song of grief,

Ye little waves, for my heart's relief!

Sigh, sigh, rushes!

Moan, waves, moan!

A POOR MONK OF SKARA

My life's on the wane and I'm spent with work,
A wretched and ignorant renegade clerk,
A runaway fled from his order afar, a
Brother condemned by the chapter of Skara.

I'm now but an old and broken man,
Although from the shame of the church's ban
For manslaughter and for heresy
The king has pardoned and set me free.

Because Lars Kanik I smote in wrath,
The brethren hastened to dog my path.
They hunted me like a wolf in the wood;
That I was a monk, that alone was good.

A surly and obstinate monk was I,
That many a pull took on the sly —

To pay my pains — from the abbot's tun,
And sinned most vilely with a nun.
My muscles were iron; I'd frequent
The village inn where the wastrels went,
I joined with a cowboy and fiddler crew,
And Lars Canonicus I slew.
But misery came of those evil days,
In a foreign land I berued my ways,
For I ate the husks whence the swine had
turned,
Like the tale in the Vulgate I once had learned.

I did not sink into sin's dread clutch, —
My fellow-mortals I loved too much, —
But I had a stormy road to go,
As when the blasts of the tempest blow
A fisherman's boat on a rugged shore
And leave him there battered and wounded sore
Until at last he feels
That his torn body heals.

They shut me up in a gloomy cell,
Then drove me out with beasts to dwell —
Wild beasts that catch with cruel claw,
And tear their prey, and bite and gnaw.
They taught me hatred, sin and deceit,
While bitterness was my drink and meat.
I felt myself doomed to death and damnation,
In Satan's power beyond salvation;
Condemned to hell at the Judgment Day,
I lusted now to burn and slay.
But the sigh of the woods, the voice of the
 stream,
The beauty of morning's wakening gleam,
And the weeping sound of the autumn rain, —
These brought me back to love again.

And dew and the brooks and the bird's fresh song,
Meadow flowers, and the elk as he bounded along,
And the squirrel's joy in the top of the fir
Set life and hope in my veins astir,

Gave self-respect once more
And taught a rich new lore.

It is not true, the ancient story
That some are shut out from heaven's glory,
For every soul may enter free;
Not as sheep and goats, but alike are we.
There is no good man so firm in right
That he may trust in his virtue's might,
Nor is there a sinner so foul within
That in anguish of heart he may trust in sin.
Then do not boast, my brother,
Nor chide and judge another.

And he who sits so mighty at Rome,
He must, like me, endure his doom
With many a monk and titled priest
And learnèd doctors, most and least.
The noble who sits so proud in his tower
Must likewise be taught of sorrow's power,

On kings the weight of sorrow falls,
Yea, emperors its might appalls;
All these may go astray, —
But wherefore chide for aye?

Thus o'er the earth the people roam,
And not a man knows whence we come,
And none knows whither the way will lead
And none knows what is life, indeed.
And yet beyond the clouds of strife
There dawns far off a better life;
Where none is evil, none is good,
But all as brothers breast the flood,
Each lending each a hand
While struggling to the strand.

In this world here my honor is gone,
I sit in the darksome woods alone,
And never shall better days be mine.
But I'll not grieve nor yet repine:
The birds mount gayly toward the skies,

With every morn the sun doth rise,
The birch-tree buds anew, —
Why should not I hope too?

Perhaps, when a thousand years have flown
Like clouds over cottage and castle blown,
A rider may wend through the forest here,
May tether his horse to a birch-tree near,
May open the door, peep in and see
My hermit den and its misery.
And he may notice this message then,
On parchment writ with a goose-quill pen.

Then will he say: "So long ago
Did this man learn what we all now know,
And foresee the age that upon this earth
After long, long strife has been brought to
birth? —

And yet was he of yore a
Poor banished Monk of Skara!"

SONGS OF KING ERIC

NOTE. — Eric XIV, son of Gustavus Vasa, was one of the most romantic of Swedish kings. Of a highly poetic temperament, he was at one time a suitor for the hand of Mary Queen of Scots. Later, however, his ambition led him into war with Denmark, in which he was defeated. He was dethroned by his brother John and finally murdered in prison, 1577. A passionate but inconstant lover, Eric's most sincere attachment seems to have been for Karin, a beautiful girl who followed him to prison when he was overcome by age and disgrace.

I

TO KARIN, AFTER SHE HAD DANCED

Of noble blossoms will I wind thee

A wreath to crown thy beauteous hair,

And of my love too will I bind thee

A garland thou for aye shalt wear.

With my two hands myself will twine it
About the head so dear to me,
To crown thy gray hair and enshrine it
In days when I no more shall be.

As in the dance my love was gliding,
How fair! how young! but never gay, —
So in this wreath a thorn is hiding,
And poison taints the flowers away.

I see a drop of blood now quiver
And o'er my darling's forehead flow,
Alas! there's pain in all I give her;
My gift brings ill, my wreath brings woe.

II

TO KARIN, IN PRISON

Wet me with tears, oh, judge not by rules, —
Fool that I am, a fool among fools.

Fair was my crown and my kingdom was great,
I was a king, — yea, an emperor's mate.

Splintered my kingdom and shattered my
crown,
In this dark cell for my sins I atone.

I'd loyal subjects and kinsmen and friends,
Blood of my kinsfolk now darkens my hands.

Faithful my men went to war with my foes,
Faithful drew sword when the battle-tide rose.

Fair to the market the peasant girls came,
Up to my castle I dragged them to shame.

Last I found you, when misfortune was rife;
Spring was despoiled to give autumn new life.

Oft have you poured bitter tears on my breast;
Judge me not, judge me not, — cover the rest!

III

KING ERIC'S LAST SONG

What use to shout, what help in weeping,
King John and God have me in keeping.
King John has bound me fast in chains,
But by God's grace this hope remains:
Thy body is thy prison cell,
And would'st thou there no longer dwell,
Jump and dash out thy foolish brains!

WINTER NIGHT

Riding more sedately,
Let us view the stately
Forest castle white:
Marble is the flooring;
Branches, whitely soaring,
Rise toward heaven's height.

Not a flake is stirred here,
Not a note is heard here
Of the singing storm;
Snow each nook encumbers,
And beneath it slumbers
Summer's frozen form.

Icicles are gleaming
Now above the dreaming

Season's deep repose,
Curtains whitely hover
Her chill couch to cover,
Watchful pines enclose.

Moonbeams with a bitter
Cold metallic glitter
Light the lonely hall,
And from all the darkling
Corners comes a sparkling
As of diamonds all.

Stars, like tears congealing,
Stud the castle ceiling,
Rich with filigree.
Shadows, faintly glimmering,
Cross the wide and shimmering
Chamber silently.

“I WOULD THAT I WERE—”

I would that I were in India Land —
The India of my dreams,
With pearls for gravel and rubies for sand,
And palaces which at the turn of a hand
Should bloom by her sacred streams.

I would that my house were of smooth bamboo
In the shade of a palm-tree grove,
Where the cooling breath of the west-wind blew,
And the choir of the jungle would chant anew
Of hunting, of strife and love.

A girl as brown as mahogany
With silk upon bosom and hips
Would sit half bent in the palm-grove's lee —
I'd lay my head on her delicate knee
And list to her murmuring lips.

Then soft as the whisper of twilight she'd tell
Of the pilgrimage of the soul,
Of Karma's fight with the fiends of hell,
And how at the end the dead rest well
In Nirvana, the strange far goal.

Oh, to loose my soul from these leaden skies,
This wakeful, tormented strand,
From cold and the scorn of withered eyes,
To dwell in that dreamy paradise,
A native of India Land !

FYLGIA

Fylgia, Fylgia, do not flee!
When I'm all on fire to enfold you.
Timid one, exquisite, shun not me!
Though with stupid thoughts I behold you, —
You whose form is so pure it seems
To hover in beauty and starry beams,
Till it melts in the light
Before my sight;
As near me it flies,
Yet far
As the distant, distant skies, —
Unapproachable, coveted one that you are,
Maiden of longed-for loveliness,
Spirit attired in the silvery sheen of life's most
ethereal dress,
Whose happy cheek is aglow with love's pinkest
wild-rose caress!

Fylgia, Fylgia, do not flee!
Timid one, exquisite, shun not me!
My longed-for loveliness,
You that in nightly visions bless
With consolation for the day's distress!

MAN AND WOMAN

To Eve the wrathful Adam said :
"You greedy, you disgusting jade,
For you I toil and get no sleep,
Who led me into sin how deep !
You plucked from the forbidden tree
The cursed fruit and gave it me.
Our life of innocence you blighted,
Your naked loins to lust invited,
Your beauty sunk me in the fire
Of bestial and blind desire.
'Twas you from Eden barred me out,
With fiery walls now ringed about.
Your tongue's a serpent from which drips
All evil through your hateful lips,
And like a fang, when I would eat,
Your speech pours poison on my meat.

If then the will to smite o'ertakes me,
I look, and all my strength forsakes me.
A cringing dog you've made of me—
I loathe, I loathe you utterly.
Accursed be you!”

The woman smiled in her disdain
And mocking answered him again :
“Disgusting brute, I leave with you
Your names, where they are rightly due.
You are the serpent, for you swell
With evils, though with you they dwell
In silence; you, the poisonous tooth;
And you the dog with greedy mouth.
You hate but never dare to break
The vessel where your thirst you slake,
To get my body for your lust
You lick my hand and cringe in dust!
I bore with many a weary smart
Your body's fruit beneath my heart,

Your child I nourish with my blood, —
In pain and shame I give it food.
Accursed be *you!*”

He clenched his fist and struck a blow
So hard the blood began to flow
Adown her cheek. She bit her teeth,
Fled far and sat herself beneath
A bank by the Euphrates’ side,
Where she might watch its whirling tide,
And mourn and grieve and dumbly brood
In dreams of hate with vengeful mood.
Meanwhile the man had thrown him down
And dug the earth with grovelling crown,
The while his trembling limbs gave token
Of sorrow for his words ill-spoken.
In soul he saw her bleed again,
Beheld her features wrenched with pain,
And wept until his eyes were red
For all the cruel drops he’d shed.

Remorse awakened in his mind
With memories of how good and kind
She'd been, preparing day by day
His food and helping every way,
Cherishing him both soon and late,
And comforting through love and hate.
He thought of how her eyes would dim
With sadness at harsh words from him,
How lovingly her hand would lead
The son he gave her, with what heed
When evening darkened she would strew
On the dry grass a bed for two,
And how then, as the latest light
Of sunset faded into night,
Their limbs would twine in sweet embrace
With joy and fear before God's face.

Thus Adam thought, and rising up
To seek her, saw how drop by drop
Her blood had fallen, saw the trace

Her steps had made with wandering pace,
Till by the river he descried her
With Cain, his little son, beside her.
With deep distress his bosom heaved,
At once he suffered, hated, grieved.
Then Adam went to her and spoke:
“Why did I strike you such a stroke?
Your cheek is bleeding, dear; I’ll go
Fetch water from the stream below.
With healing herbs I’ll ease the smart
My blow has caused within your heart.
Your grief I’ll grieve for, and I’ll share
The heavy burdens you must bear.
I would not dwell alone like this,
Accurst and driven from Eden’s bliss;
The joy and grief of man and woman,
Yea, all our hard life, is in common.
Each other living thing we see
Around us is an enemy.”
So Adam spoke his inmost thought,

But Eve was still and answered not.
And Adam, too, in dumb distress
Sank down his head in bitterness.

But when once more with sudden change
He would have seized on fresh revenge,
The woman yielded, turned and pressed
Close to him, then her arms she placed
Upon his shoulders, clung there fast
About his neck, and spoke at last :
“I would not ever blame and chide you,
Nor see you weep and so deride you.
Let both forgive whate’er may grieve us,
Since He, our Lord, does not forgive us !
We are condemned to sin forever,
To quarrel oft, agreeing never ;
To dog and bitch we two are kin ;
Then let us sin and loathe our sin,
Endure together fate’s decree,
And suffer all life’s misery,

And hate and quarrel and contend
And love until the world shall end.”

Thus then the man and woman drew
Together and their whole lives through
Continued so, and multiplied
(An ancient writ declares) and died.
But thus, while Time pursues his flight
With mighty wing-beats day and night,
Abideth man's and woman's fate
From Adam to the present date.

A DREAM OF THE ORIENT

I slept and I dreamed
Of the Orient Land,
Where treasure outstreamed
From the Sun-God's hand
Over all of the fortunate region around,
As, when a volcano has shattered the ground,
The fruits of the earth abound.

I dreamed of apple-trees planted thickly,
Of streams by old forests gliding quickly,
Of cherry groves and of currant bushes
In lonely dales where the torrent rushes,
Of wheat that springs at its own sweet will
In desert valleys where all is still,
Of hop-vines deep in the woods that cling
And from trunk to trunk their tendrils fling, —

And of pastures that spread
By some waterfall,
Whence cattle are led
By the boys to the stall,
When the dew is sprinkled at evening late,
And there amid buckets little and great
The wives and the mothers wait.

There man is strong and woman is soft,
And youth is nimble to bound aloft;
And 'all are naked, both high and low,
From harlot to virgin pure as snow.
But if 'mid the throng there's a garment gleaming
Gay-hued around hips or loose hair streaming,
It does but show that a maiden there
Would seem to her lover more sweet and fair.

Where the curving swirls
Of the river flow,
A smoke-wreath curls
From the tents below;

And there in repose, while the little ones play
And whimper and smile and toddle away,
Sit the old folk, the silver-gray.

But o'erlooking the mist, in radiant light,
The king's house stands on a rocky height.
On the cliffs at the time of midsummer heat
In full assembly the people meet,
And the king gives judgment from his throne,
And thinks for his people, and talks with the
 sun,
And the sun sows down on him knowledge
 rare
Of all things that shall be and are and were.

II

Behold! through the forest a youth roams free,
And a bolder youth there never could be;
His blood is as surf when the March wind raves,
For strife he craves,

No feat is too daring for such as he.
The mightiest wrestlers and those who cast
The javelin farthest he has surpassed;
He openly kissed the prettiest maid
When the dancers paused to rest in the shade,
While her suitors looked on aghast.

I saw in my dream how glad and strong
Was his every stride as he paced along,
With freedom in every line displayed;
While upon his lips was a mystery laid,
For the secret grace
Of the gods' high race
In their scion was there betrayed.

With joyous foot-step the young man strays
Down the wood's wild ways;
Then stands and smiles, when insects crawl
And threaten his toes with their nippers small,
He jests with the cuckoos, he teases the thrushes,
Then for ease he follows a trail;

He rests on a ledge by the lake-side rushes,
Watches a fish leap with flashing tail,
And falls on his knees by the brink,
Joins his hands and stoops to drink.

I saw in my dream that his face grew bright
With joy as the image met his sight, —
This youth of race divine
Saw there his beauty shine.

III

Slim small feet now on tip-toe
Slowly, slyly toward him go,
Now they scurry, now they pause,
Not a sound they make, because
He must never hear or know
That slim small feet now toward him go.

There behind a tree are smiling
Happy eyes with look beguiling,

Shoulders tremble as in doubt
Like a timid lamb, until,
Cautiously and slyly still,
See! a girl slips out.

IV

And with that like the wind apace
She throws her arms round the hunter's face
And has covered his eyes,
And exults in her catch. Haha! and heehee!
He can never get free
No matter how hard he tries.

"Stupid One, look where your pride
Has brought you!
Guess! of all those you defied
Who has caught you?"

And she pulls him about
And pinches and beats him to make him cry
out

And to frighten him well for her whim,
And she plagues him and tortures his back with
her knees,
But such torments as these
Are as love-bed caresses to him.

Blind, he struggles to get loose,
Gropes and guesses: "Pull and Tear
Are your names, or Beat and Bruise,
Pinch and Scratch — unhand me there!"

With a laugh and a skirl
He was free, he sprang up, he had captured the
girl
And he held her tight
That with kisses his mouth might be sated quite.
And she clung there at first,
Then whimpered and then into sobs she burst,
And she sought for his look
Till a gleam of his innermost soul she took.

At last, as the buds of an orient rose
Their hidden leaves from the sheath uncloze
At the touch of the sun and the soft spring air,
So lay she, naked, dishevelled, fair,
Knees parted and bosom that swelled ever higher
To answer her lover's desire.

v

And as the two cotyledons abide
In closest union folded heart to heart
Before the tiny seed has burst apart,
So lay they, hip by hip and side by side
In tender wise as sister might by brother,
But these were panting, blushing with the moil
Of love's first sudden, unexpected toil,
With tight-locked arms embracing each the
other.

But with the light that did not cease to pour
From ever-shining realms of happiness

Came Joy, the Sun-God's winged ambassador
The loving union of the pair to bless,
And he, as sunbeams through the forest glide,
Descending, touched and hallowed o'er and
o'er
This godlike son of mortals and his bride.

DREAMS IN HADES

Once, — though a lethargy oppressed my
brain, —

Lying and brooding, eyelids both ajar,
I saw a pale and quivering flame of light
Flare on its torch, burn slowly down again,
Flicker and fail. And then I saw a star
That glimmered softly from the depths of night.

The moon shone in, but with so chill a beam
Methought 'twas like St. Elmo's fire in bloom
Upon some mast o'er darkened waves below,
Like phosphor-wood too or the moss-fed gleam
Of Will-o'-the-Wisp, or when above a tomb
On St. John's Eve we see a fitful glow.

The air was like to earth which, thinning, tends
To rise and float as vapor; it was dim

And thick and full of shadowy spectral things.
'Twas as when light with darkness meets and
 blends, —

A druid sheen, unnatural and grim,
Such as an ancient tale of witchcraft brings.

Dark forms I saw in that strange atmosphere,
Dead races of mankind that seemed to bide
With trustful expectation, rows on rows,
Until the light of morning should appear;
Silently there they slumbered side by side,
Layer by layer in their dream-repose.

Dimly as ocean-surges half-suppressed
I heard the hum of myriad voices rise,
Muffled as tones from muted harp-string sped;
I heard a murmur wash from east to west,
Ascending, falling, — questions and replies —
Which rolled like swelling billows to my bed.

II

Through the sounds I heard there
Ran a rhythmic sway,
But in every word there
Hidden meanings lay;
Every mystic token,
Every searching tone
In the least word spoken,
With a sigh was gone.

What my cold and clever
Mind would turn to thought,
Foiled my best endeavor,
All was harsh and naught.
Grief would seize impulsive
On that dream of death,
And a throe convulsive
Rack and stop its breath.
Thus the only trophy
Hades left with me

Was a crabbed strophe
Limping wearily.

III

Clamor of Albion's harp-strings,
Murmurs of song from the Northland,
Beowulf's story or Fingal's
Heard I or saw or perceived there
Glimmer and echo through Hades,
Dim and yet wondrously lovely.

Fables of Anglian monarchs,
Legends of witches from Denmark,
Sad-hearted Gaelic traditions,
Lays of the Grail and of Merlin
Filled mine ears full with the strains of
Heathenish bards from aforetime.

Half-Christian gnostic magicians,
Wise men who dwelt in the Eastland,

Seers with druidical knowledge
Such as men seek in the hidden
Depths of philosophers' stones, —
These filled with visions my chamber.

IV

I saw a sleeper's
Chin uplifted
From which a black beard
O'er silent mail
Flowed soft and graceful,
Above the collar
Arose a visage
Proud and pale.

I saw a singer's
Mournful forehead,
Dark hair encircling
The features all,
And vision-haunted
Were lips that erstwhile

Had sung perchance in
King Arthur's hall.

I saw his death-dim
Eyes unclosing
To seek for some one
He found not there;
Once more they shut then,
And in that moment
The apparition
Dissolved in air.

But for long after
I heard soft accents
Telling melodious
The old sad tale,
A half-forgotten
Minstrel saga
From some far Irish
Or English dale.

Did I not love a maiden
Was kind and fair to see?
Did I not sleep, and, dreaming, lay
My head upon her knee,
While the red sun behind the oaks
Was sinking mistily?

And had I not a bridal night
Graced by the stars' pale sheen,
While o'er us leafy branches waved
Their canopy of green,
And soft winds blew and wavelets beat
The reeds and rocks between?

She gave me her husband's royal
Gold chain, — my heart knows how
She fitted it about my head
And wound it o'er my brow;
Her soul she gave, and for my sake
She broke her holy vow.

Long, long our eyes were forced to drink
Of bitter tears their fill,
What time with melancholy smile
We loved through good and ill,
We loved in sin and happiness,
In shame and joy loved still.

At length I heard a monkish voice
Proclaim with accents dread :
“Fair is this life to look upon,
The cheeks of love are red ;
But now thy loved one’s hue is pale,
Osviva now is dead.

“Osviva now shall slumber
Full long in cold repose,
For slumber, dreams, and death at last, —
All these she freely chose,
And unrepentant, never
To heaven her spirit goes.”

Monk, 'tis but tales and legends,
By fools alone 'tis said
That, till the latest autumn
Its latest leaf has shed,
The Great Deliverer visits not
The city of the dead.

Have ages sighed above my soul
Since I was dead and gone?
I feel the day within me,
I know it soon will dawn,
And The Delivering Spirit
Will free us every one!

Like seas in motion
When the winds drive them,
Like a wave speeding,
The whisper went,
To tell of dawn in
The night of Hades,

A mystic message
Of wonderment.

Soon sank the murmur
Deep in the darkness,
Where on dream-pinions
My spirit soared,
Then the strange phantom
Rose again toward me, —
I saw the vision,
I caught the word.

Over the features
Fell for a moment
A gleam of brighter
Light than before,
But it was soft as
A ray of moonlight
Falling from Life's night
Through Hades' door.

“THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN STARS —”

There should have been stars to make your
brow more fair,

Each one a gem,

Like links and clasps of some bright diadem,

Dull gold or silver, resting on your hair,

Whence wavy streamers flow,

Such as the Northern Lights in winter midnight
sow.

Your foot was delicate, the instep slender ;

Lone you went by,

But modest was your mien and proudly shy.

Like to a dream-spun vision, brightly tender,

Which hovered in the air,

You seemed enfolded all in starry radiance
rare.

"THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN STARS—" 137

Music and sorrow glimmered around your face;

But wistful, chill,

The song that scarcely from your lips could
thrill.

Nor might your form, though moulded all of
grace,

Follow your spirit's motion,

To show its free delight like billows on the
ocean.

Your head was bent, a reed before the blast;

Your cheek was pale

As palest flowers in a woodland vale;

But dark as is the vault of heaven o'ercast

With deepest shades of night

Your eyes, that sought far lands, obscure to
mortal sight.

I felt in you the grief of flickering flame,

Of stifled sighs,

Yearning toward godhead in your voice and eyes.

You were as a singing-girl, from whom there
came

A whisper but no song;

Sick were you 'mid the sound, and weak among
the strong.

I thought: "How rich are you in love, in pas-
sion;

Your soul might warm

All joy, all beauty in its fostering charm.

What will avail your wealth?—In shameful
fashion

You'll be despoiled of men,

Crushed like a woodland violet in a robber's den.

"In degradation you may bend, perchance,

A slave or worse,

All for your beauty and your frailty's curse.

For those that sweetliest dream and mildliest
glance,

“THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN STARS —” 139

Most brutally they must

Be trampled to the earth and soiled with
dust.”

But fortune has been kind to you thus far :

When men rejected ;

Peris, it may be, have your ways protected.

For me, I love you as a song, a star

That fades with morning's ray,

Or as a lovely legend of an elder day.

“SEE WHERE THE DREAMER COMES”

· See where the Dreamer comes! (they said):
Turning this way his downcast head.

On lonely paths he wanders far;
He is not as we others are.

He dreams that — curse his lying dream! —
Sun, moon and stars all bow to him.

He is our father's dearest son:
Come, let us slay him and have done!

PRINCE ALADDIN OF THE LAMP

The luckless Prince Aladdin
Has now no lamp, alas!
He feels beneath his mantle
Where heretofore it was.
His ring he seeks amain, too,
And finds it not again, too,
For now no ring he has.
The mighty Prince Aladdin
Has lost his wits no doubt,
And blindly gropes about.

He importunes the ether:
"Come, fairy castle mine,
With pearls and rubies gleaming
And halls forever streaming
With white and golden shine!

And you, ye sprites, fulfil now
This task with heedful care
And bring me to my will now
Princess Bedrulbudour,
The moon-mild maiden rare!"

So reels along the street there
Amid the thickest press
The mighty Prince Aladdin
In ragged helplessness:
"Come here and see the fun,
Just listen to his pother;
The crazy tailor's son
Thinks he's the Sultan's brother!"

"Ye tailors and ye beggars,
Ye know not sprites at all.
One only needs to beckon,
One only needs to call:
'Come castle, come, come here!'"
He fixes then his eyes on

The blue far-off horizon

Until it shall appear.

The common people sneer :

“Your castle’s in the moon there ;

Fly up and you’ll be soon there !”

Alack ! the lamp’s poor owner

May never more have rest,

Nor may he trust his fortune

Who once the ring possessed.

He feels that now no tittle

Of his remaining little

.Is left to him secure ;

Though ’tis but doubts defeat him,

These childish errors cheat him

Till nothing may endure.

The lamp is high creative power,

The chiefest strength of man ;

The magic ring is faith’s rich dower,

Wherewith he all things can.

SO GOES THE WORLD

The sea is raging, the storm-winds blow,

The billows are rolling ashen gray.

“Captain, a man has been swept away!”

Ha, so!

“Captain, you still may save him, though.”

(The sea is raging, the storm-winds blow.)

“Still we could toss him a rope if you say.”

Ha, so!

(The billows are rolling ashen gray.)

“Captain, he’s sunk, he’s gone down for aye!”

Ha, so!

(The sea is raging, the storm-winds blow.)

IDEALISM AND REALISM

I'm sick of this new-fangled schism,

 This earth-and-stars dissension :

Idealism and realism,

 Our brain-devised contention.

'Tis Art when mud is painted right

 (Such is the false conclusion) ;

While heavenly visions, fair and bright,

 Forsooth, are cloud-illusion.

But though the box be gold, yet snuff

 Is snuff — so one supposes ; —

And though the vase be cracked and rough,

 Still roses will be roses.

A GIRL IN THE EYES

I

In some obscure old magic-book
I came on this direction :
Standing before a mirror, look
At your own eyes' reflection.

And if no face but yours appear
Upon the pupil's curtain,
Then to no maiden you are dear,
And you love none, 'tis certain.

But if within your heart the glow
Of passion's hidden fire is,
The maiden's face will surely show
Enshrined within your iris.

To trust in such a trick is naught
But superstitious error,
And yet it came into my thought
One day before a mirror.

I gazed and gazed, and saw therein
My clownish features only;
My faded cheek, my weary grin
Of failure blank and lonely,

The night of grief that overcast
My brow with dark misprision, —
All these I gazed on till at last
I saw them in a vision.

I saw myself and cried out: "Hey!
You daughter of my mother,
You're like a counterfeit display
Of your unhappy brother.

“You have my manner to the life,
As one are we most truly;
Come Self, I’ll take you then to wife
And raise a brood unruly :—

“A bloated fry of songs and jokes
And thoughts of knavish rancor,
With humor like to death-knell strokes,
And hope a long-lost anchor!—

“Small cherubs they with clownish mien,
Like to their father only, —
His faded cheek, his weary grin
Of failure blank and lonely.

“And so I’ll love myself no doubt,
Since I’ve no girl to cherish,
Until at last the flame goes out
As coals in ashes perish.

"I am in truth a burnt-out coal
Of hot consuming passion,
I feed the fire with alcohol
In artificial fashion.

"I blaze aloft until my core
Is naught at all but ashes;
I want to leap, I must have more
Than these poor fitful flashes."

II

And so, with drink o'erladen,
I searched from morn till eve,
Still hoping to achieve
The much-desired maiden.

The "joy-girl's" air appealing,
Professionally wise,
Could not from me disguise
Her actual want of feeling.

And winter-cold as fishes
Fast frozen in the ice,
If any dared entice,
Was she who washed the dishes.

Abashed, I sought the park yet,
Where silken veils were streaming
And summer dresses gleaming
Like flowers in the market;

Where high-born dames a-plenty
Raised o'er their well-shod feet
And insteps fine and neat
Their skirts with manner dainty.

I got for my advances
From those I met and passed,
Half bold and half downcast,
The very sweetest glances.

I followed in the city
The skirt that best revealed
The charms that it concealed
Of limbs and ankles pretty.

The figure flowing over,
As 'twere, with woman's might,
'Twas this would most delight
A poor and needy lover;

The look that freeliest showered
The largest rain of pence
On one, all indigence,
Who by the gutter cowered.

Then shameless as a battered
Old tramp, whose manner says
He has "seen better days,"
I stood, begrimed and tattered,

Beside the curbstone. Many
A girl I saw go by,
And tried to catch her eye
While, dumb, I begged a penny.

“Ah, give to a poor devil
A bit of bread to eat,
A little piece of meat,
And he will thank you civil!

“Give him a week in mercy,
A day, or but an hour,
To taste and know love’s power.
You won’t? Go on, then, curse ye!

“At worst, you still might spare me
One little kiss, to show
A girl once long ago
Was happy to be near me.”

But even she whose favor
Was prodigally shed,

Who gave herself as bread
To any that might crave her,

She shook her head for answer
And said, reluctantly:
“Give something, you, to me,
And then no doubt I can, sir.”

III

But in a window near the City Hall
A caliph's castle built of spice-cake stood,
All roofed with chocolate instead of wood,
And in a shallop just beneath the wall
A sugar prince most delicately played
On a guitar of gilded marchpane made.

Behind the castle was a canvas screen,
And over that, with most disconsolate air,
As if she were the caliph's captive there,
A maiden at a counter might be seen,

Who walked and moved about, the sole defender

Of the great sugar caliph's paper splendor.

Yes, you are like a charming shepherdess
Caught by the caliph to become his slave,
The graceful ways of freedom still you have,
A sort of easy boyish happiness;
And yet your head, so meekly toward me leaning,
Has to my thought a mournful captive's meaning.

There stands within a near-by room
A sofa that I often sit in
To drink my bitter beer with gloom,
And there by throbs of grief I'm smitten
While, with self-scorn made desperate,
I learn the penalty of fate.

And when she sees me there distressed,
A weary, sick and wounded man,

A wanderer from the caravan
Whom robbers fall on and molest,
She plays the good Samaritan
As in the Bible 'tis expressed.
She pours with charity courageous
The balm of laughter all-contagious
And wine of sympathetic glances
On the poor victim of mischances.

Kind maiden, will you still do so?
'Tis well then in your habitation.
I'm thirsty, give me consolation;
To you, kind maiden, will I go.

IV

For the whole girl not a penny,
Not a farthing would I pay,
If her glance would show not any
Smile, but like a foe at bay
She would fight as for her due

And would reckon: "Give me eight now,
That's a sum I won't abate now;
Come, you nice good fellow, you!"

Not a nail, a rag, a button
For the girl I'd offer there,
If in virtuous pride she'd put on
Some dull, prudish, ugly air;
Or her hue with fear would deaden,
Bloodless at the shameful hint,
Till the cheek that once could redden
Lost its lovely tint,
When she heard me tell too truly
My remorse for deeds unruly,
Sins that knew no stint.

When I stammer: "I've been wasting
Myself sick for love's delight,
Liquor too I'm always tasting,
Night and day, and day and night,

In the street I held carousal
Till from many a loose proposal
Women fled in fright," —
She must blush and be but sad, then,
Must but say: "Well, that's too bad, then,
Are you never really through
With your girl-craze, my nice lad then,
You dear fine good fellow, you!"

v

Overlook the faults of which I've spoken,
Please forget I'm drunk — and bald as well,
Only think that, when a nut is broken,
You may find a kernel in the shell.

Be an odalisque to fit my wishes,
Leaning captive from her balcony;
For the balustrade you have your dishes,
For your marchpane princeling — I am he.

Hear the cithar, hear my song of sorrow
Echoing from a far-off fountain clear.
I'm disguised, — these robes I do but borrow; —
Girl, I am not what I now appear, .

But a Greek, — if you'd correct your error, —
And Narcissus is the name I owe,
I was self-enamoured in the mirror
Of a shadowy fountain long ago.

This mad love so violently charmed me
That I filled the woods with my lament,
Until Aphrodite's power transformed me
To the wretch on whom your smile is bent.

Yes, you smile, your soul is like my own, dear,
Which would weep, but smiles its grief instead.
Here's the ladder. Quick! let us begone, dear,
In the boat before they guess we're fled,

VI

Be you blest, O tender-hearted maid,
Blest that you forgive me,
And from pain reprieve me,
Though you know the paltry part I've played.

You give sympathy to me, a churl,
Not as one above me,
But as if you love me,
From the breast of a poor sinful girl.

You are wine to make the weak man strong;
Robes to hide his shame in,
Food for him in famine,
When through barren fields he limps along.

VII

But dreams are dreams most surely,
And words are merely air;
You sew away demurely
Beside the counter there,

You watch the people going,
And think mild thoughts no doubt,
While flower-garlands growing
Beneath your hands trail out.

And I take back my homely
Old face into my den,
Where gloomily and dumbly
I scan my face again.

A girl now, to my seeming,
Nods through the pupil's door,
Within the iris gleaming, —
Then straight is seen no more.

But Ego stays the same there,
The I that can not vary,
That no one can displace,
Unless from heaven came there
A kind old-fashioned fairy
To nod and rouse a flame there

By taking *your* sweet face,
Her cheek with blushes burning,
While with a secret yearning
She longed for my embrace.
But since I'm doomed to grind out
Such lines as these above,
While you are set to find out
Your lifelong path of love, —
My wishes are but phrases
Compared with a caress,
Like flowers without vases,
And words quite meaningless.

THE PRAYER-MEETING

“Dear friends, the wages of sin is death, indeed;
His sin was great, but prayer is strong at need.
Our brother Andersson has gone astray,
And left — poor youth! — the straight and
narrow way.”

Alas! poor slaves of sin are we;
Lord, keep us from iniquity.

“Richly endowed beyond all priests he was
With heavenly grace, — our youthful Barnabas.
His gifts of exhortation, more than human,
Roused many souls, especially of women.
Pleasant as Joseph was he to behold,
And tempted too as Joseph was of old.
— Oh, my young friends, ye tread on perilous
ground! —

Yet thought we Andersson was strong and sound,

And could from devils win the victory;
But devils have been mightier than he!"

Oh, fallen, fallen Ichabod,
How sin doth rage in flesh and blood!

"A worthy widow for his wife we gave,
Steadfast and not too young, who well might save
The young man from the snares of Satan's guile
And fleshly lures of worldliness, the while.
A silent, sober woman, tried and true
Of heart was she, a faithful watcher too,
Who at her post was ever diligent
And followed Andersson where'er he went. —
Yet wisdom is but weakness here below,
As this assembly needeth not to know:
Our erring brother fled by night away
With Fia Bergman to America!"

Oh, sin and trouble, griefs and fears,
This world is but a vale of tears!

PIOUS INEPTITUDE

Though Samoyeds have gods of carven bone,
And hoodoo-doctors, painted up to fright men,
Go scaring negro boys in Tanganyika, —

I do not flout them.

But goblins clad in black that come to drone
Into the ears of European white men
The priestly fetish-lore of Tanganyika —

I freely scout them.

A LOVE-SONG

I purchased my love for money,
Else ne'er had I known its might;
No less did I sing to the gay harp-string
Right sweetly of love's delight.

A dream, though it soon be vanished,
Is sweet when it answers our will;
And Eden to him who is banished
Is beauteous Eden still.

NOTES

. PAGES 24-31. MOUNTAIN TROLLS and THE OLD MOUNTAIN TROLL: The Norse troll is properly a sort of loathsome cannibal giantess. In the second poem certain human characteristics are subtly blended after the manner of Browning's CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS.

PAGE 31. The last line of the Swedish has been changed in the translation in order to clarify the meaning.

PAGE 48 (AN OLD ROOM), line 1, "Karl-Johan": This is Bernadotte, Napoleon's marshal, afterwards Charles XIV of Sweden, the founder of the present royal family.

PAGE 48, lines 13-16: These are various Swedish romantic poets of about 1820-50. Tegnér is of course the author of the famous FRITHIOF'S SAGA. LILIES OF SHARON was written by Erik Johann Stagnelius.

PAGES 91, 92. THE KING'S MISTRESS: This title is an arbitrary one used by the translator to combine two poems which treat of the same story. In the Swedish the poems are side by side, but otherwise unconnected. There seems to be some doubt among commentators as to whether Fröding is here idealizing an experience of his own or is merely sketching a tale of the remote past; the translator has preferred the

latter hypothesis, into which the former idea may be read if the reader so desires.

PAGE 107 ("I WOULD THAT I WERE —"), line 3, "Karma": Karma, in Indian belief, is the personality which the soul builds by its conduct in the various incarnations through which it goes. The stanza has been freely rendered, to follow the atmosphere rather than the details.

PAGE 140 ("SEE WHERE THE DREAMER COMES"): Cf. Genesis 37: 19.

PAGE 162 (THE PRAYER-MEETING): The elder evidently tells the story, and the congregation comes in from time to time with a sympathetic couplet.

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